

ACCW  
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Discussion Group Speakers: from left to right: Lorraine Holding, Jennie McInnes, Sissel Ekaas and Mark Waldron



## Discussion Groups

### "Visions for a Changing World"

When talking about a changing world, the word that most often comes to mind nowadays is globalization. It is not a new phenomenon. What is new is the unprecedented acceleration in the pace of change that we have witnessed over the past decade, manifested in the growing integration of economies in societies through the flow between countries of information, ideas, institutions, labour, technologies, goods, services, capital, and not least, people. ... Although globalization offers opportunities for growth and development in many parts of the world, the benefits have not so far materialized, in particular in low-income countries with a food deficit. ...

Without the physical infrastructure and the political capacity to influence the terms or market relations the rural poor are unable to benefit from the potential benefits offered. So far, it appears that globalization brings opportunities or prosperity for those engaged in the modern sector and favours the urban population already endowed with assets, both physical and human. There is a growing body of evidence that globalization has intensified the social exclusion and marginalization of poor people and led to fundamental changes in their livelihoods.

When I first worked in Africa about 20 years ago, my visions of rural life were of women and their adolescent daughters spending their days toiling long hours in dry fields under the sweltering sun, with broken tools or tools unsuitable to their tasks or to their bodies. Walking for hours each day along dusty dirt roads to find firewood and water to ensure at least one cooked meal for their families, and suffering from numerous waterborne diseases, smoke inhalation and malnutrition. I am sure that some of our sisters here

from Africa would say that wasn't 20 years ago, that is still today. It begs the question, what is in globalization for them? My guess is, unfortunately, not much and not yet. ...

I wish to return to the notion of a vision for a changing world and share with you my vision of a changed world in which world poverty and hunger are eliminated, and where rural women and girls enjoy the same rights as male members of the household and participate in and benefit equally from development, and where the contributions of each individual to the benefits of society are accounted for and valued.

Sissel Ekaas  
Director, Women and Population Division  
Sustainable Development Department  
Food and Agriculture Organization, Rome

### "Visions Becoming Reality"

*"A task without a vision is drudgery. A vision without a task is a dream. A task with a vision is victory."*

Source: Unknown

We must have a vision or a plan to bring about reality. Visions play a large part in our lives. Most are what we would call pipe dreams, but some do become reality if there is a task associated with it. Most of our visions never reach the drawing board. But there are those who have the fortitude to persevere.

Next door in the village, over the mountain or across the water, there are women who are having visions every day to improve the lives of their family and community. Whether it is better education or improving their health or conditions in the work place. There are many such visions that have become reality around the world, in big centers and in remote villages, made possible through the Associated Country Women of the

World and its member societies.

Let's have as our vision that the advances will improve the health, nutrition, education and workload of our members around the world and make it a reality. May we also work to bring into reality the vision of peace and respect for each other in all parts of the world.

Jennie McInnes  
Women's Institutes of Nova Scotia  
Member of ACWW Projects Committee, 1995-1998

### "Visions for Rural Communities"

Rural communities are the backbone of the world, of the country, and we couldn't have 85 per cent of our people in Canada living in urban areas without a strong rural community, without strong rural societies. ...

Let's take a look at what my vision is of the rural community:

- we've got to have food and water, clean water
- we have to have adequate housing
- we have to have good clothing
- we have to have an income and cash flow
- we have to have all levels of education up to secondary
- we have to have good health services
- we also need safety and security
- we need to have recreation
- we need to have a concern for spiritual growth
- we need to have strong community contacts
- we need to have neighbours
- we also need to have a concern for culture
- we need to have volunteerism - that's what makes a rural community strong
- we also need leadership. ...

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